



THE DA VINCI CODE TRUTH OR Gnostic PROPAGANDA?

By Albert James Dager

Now that Dan Brown's runaway bestseller *The Da Vinci Code* has been made into a blockbuster movie (it grossed \$77 million its first weekend), the storm over its controversial attack against Jesus, the Bible and Christianity in general has been renewed with even greater fervor. Movies often have a greater impact upon people than do the books upon which they are based. The audio-visual impression, particularly at the hands of a talented director like Ron Howard, is far more impressive than slogging through almost 500 pages of a small paperback book.

Although the movie has received generally lukewarm reviews, and was even greeted with catcalls when it opened at the Cannes Film Festival this year, the general public seems to have taken it to their hearts. Even the long running time of two-and-one-half hours didn't seem to bother most viewers. Not having the privileges of mainline media reviewers, I had to wait until the movie opened in the Seattle area to see it. After going to two theaters and finding it sold out at the times I could attend, I finally got into the last showing at a third theater.

It was obvious that the audience was loving the movie. It even received a smattering of applause. As the fellow two seats to my right was exiting after the showing

he said, "What a great movie!" To which I replied, "For the gullible!"

And that is the truth. People must be gullible to believe that this work of fiction represents anything more than the old Gnostic anti-Christ myths propagated by Dan Brown and his ilk. Unfortunately, those myths are taking root in people's minds because of the convincing manner in which they are portrayed.

Some are asking why Christians are getting upset, after all, it's just fiction. What's the big deal?

True, it is merely fiction. But many are taking the alleged "historical" aspects of the story as the truth. There are even "Da Vinci tours" being conducted where people are taken to the various sites mentioned in the story. My wife, Jean, heard from one woman she knows who took the tour. It seems many people on the tour are asking the guides to take them to the tomb of Mary Magdalene.

Now, do you understand why it's a big deal?

The basic premise of the film is that Jesus Christ is not God in the flesh, but a mere man. As one of the antagonists in the movie said, "the greatest story ever told is a lie." In the book, the line is, "the greatest story ever told is, in fact, the greatest story ever sold."



The central plot of the story, in which the movie was generally faithful to the book, is that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and they had children whose offspring would ascend to the throne of France through the Merovingian line of kings. The heroine, Sophie Neveu (Audrey Tautou), is said to be the last surviving descendant of Jesus Christ. Along with the protagonist, Robert Langdon (Tom Hanks), Sophie embarks upon a quest to find the Holy Grail, which will prove the hypothesis of Christ's marriage. As it turns out, the Holy Grail is not the cup from which Jesus drank at the Last Supper, and into which Joseph of Arimathea allegedly captured His blood from the cross. That, we are told, is the myth—"an ingeniously conceived allegory."¹ The real Holy Grail is the body of Mary Magdalene, the hidden location of which is found in the riddles of Sophie's estranged grandfather, Jaques Saunière (Jean-Pierre Marielle), murdered Grand Master of a secret society charged with protecting the whereabouts of Magdalene's sarcophagus.

1 Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (Anchor Books - Market Edition, 2006), p. 176.

gus. (Would it be in London, in Scotland, in France?)

In the opening scenes Saunière is murdered by Silas (Paul Bettany), an albino monk serving the dictates of his Opus Dei master, Bishop Aringarosa (Alfred Molina) who wants to find the map to the Grail before it is made public so that it can be destroyed. A secret Vatican council which Aringarosa serves wishes to destroy the evidence that would lead to the Grail's location in order to keep secret the "truth" that Jesus was married and had children, thus rendering Him a mere mortal, and exposing the church's complicity in suppressing the more reliable Gnostic "gospels."

According to the story, Leonardo da Vinci was a Grand Master of the Priory of Sion, a secret organization charged with protecting the location of the Holy Grail. His art was a medium through which he gave hints of his secret knowledge, and by which he continued the tradition of the "sacred feminine" which had been destroyed by "the Church." His art, and the cryptic clues left to Sophie by Saunière would reveal the resting place of Mary Magdalene.

The story is a vehicle for celebration of the pagan goddess, and for destroying the veracity of Scripture, particularly the four Gospels. And although it is fraught with historical, factual, and scriptural errors, it has been told in such a compelling way that many non-believers in Jesus (and many professing Christians) would find it believable.

In truth, there are so many errors that it is virtually impossible to address them all without writing a book at least as long as *The Da Vinci Code* itself. We will address the more important deceptions, along with some that are merely factual errors. Using mostly secular sources, our focus will be primarily upon the book from which the movie was taken rather than upon the movie. This is because the book contains more in-depth descriptions of the author's claims.

None of the claims made in *The Da Vinci Code* are original. Brown admittedly gleaned his "history" from an earlier, pseudo-historical book, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, written by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln. *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* has already been debunked as a Gnostic myth.

To begin, we must consider one of the underlying claims upon which the entire theme of the story rests. That is whether or not the four Gospels in the Bible are reliable, or if they are less reliable than the Gnostic "gospels." For if the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John can be successfully challenged for their veracity, then the entire life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus—indeed His very nature as the only-begotten Son of God—are suspect. There is no salvation for mankind. Death is the end of us.

(For an understanding of gnosticism see the accompanying article, "Gnosticism Explained" on page 17.)

DENIGRATING THE BIBLE

Brown not only asserts the superiority of the Gnostic "gospels," over the four biblical Gospels, he goes to great lengths to vilify the Bible in total. In a conversation with Robert Langdon and Sophie, Langdon's friend, Sir Leigh Teabing (Ian McKellen), an avid Grail seeker, takes great delight in serving that end:

"To fully understand the Grail," Teabing continued, "we must first understand the Bible. How well do you know the New Testament?"

Sophie shrugged. "Not at all, really. I was raised by a man who worshipped Leonardo Da Vinci."

Teabing looked both startled and pleased. "An enlightened soul. Superb! Then you must be aware that Leonardo was one of the keepers of the secret of the Holy Grail. And he hid clues in his art."

"Robert told me as much, yes."

"And Da Vinci's views on the New Testament?"

"I have no idea."

Teabing's eyes turned mirthful as he motioned to the bookshelf across the room. "Robert, would you mind? On the bottom shelf. *La Storia di Leonardo*."

Langdon went across the room, found a large art book, and brought it back, setting it down on the table between them. Twisting the book to face Sophie, Teabing flipped open the heavy cover and pointed inside the rear cover to a series of quotations. "From Da Vinci's notebook on polemics and speculation," Teabing said, indicating one quote in particular. "I think you'll find this relevant to our discussion."

Sophie read the words.

Many have made a trade of delusions

and false miracles, deceiving the stupid multitude.

—LEONARDO DA VINCI

"Here's another," Teabing said, pointing to a different quote.

Blinding ignorance does mislead us.
O! Wretched mortals, open your eyes!

—LEONARDO DA VINCI

Sophie felt a chill. "Da Vinci is talking about the Bible?"

Teabing nodded. "Leonardo's feelings about the Bible relate directly to the Holy Grail. In fact, Da Vinci painted the true Grail, which I will show you momentarily, but first we must speak of the Bible."²

Did Leonardo da Vinci really despise the Bible? Do these quotes reflect that hatred? Or was da Vinci speaking about something else?

There is no historical record of da Vinci's feelings toward the Bible. We do know that he devoted much of his talent to producing art based on the Bible. And

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 249-250.

although he may have been antagonistic toward the Catholic Church, as were many of the Renaissance artists, there is no empirical evidence to support Teabing's (read Brown's) claim. And regardless of Brown's interpretation, there is also no empirical evidence to suggest that da Vinci encoded secret messages in his art.

Does it really matter what da Vinci thought about the Bible? No man, including Leonardo da Vinci, is the final arbiter of truth. As far as the quotes Brown attributes to da Vinci, they are what any true disciple of Jesus would say about those who reject the Bible as the inspired Word of God. The "stupid multitude" and "wretched mortals" descriptions could just as easily fit those who reject Christ. Didn't Jesus tell us that there are few who would find eternal life through genuine faith in Him as the only-begotten Son of God?

It is obvious that Brown is setting up his readers for a more vociferous condemnation of the Bible:

Teabing smiled. "And everything you need to know about the Bible can be summed up by the great canon doctor Martyn Percy." Teabing cleared his throat and declared, "The Bible did not arrive by fax from heaven."

"I beg your pardon?"

"The Bible is a product of man, my dear. Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds. Man created it as a historical record of tumultuous times, and it has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book."

"Okay."

"Jesus Christ was a historical figure of staggering influence, perhaps the most enigmatic and inspirational leader the world has ever seen. As the prophesied Mes-

siah, Jesus toppled kings, inspired millions, and founded new philosophies. As a descendant of the lines of King Solomon and King David, Jesus possessed a rightful claim to the throne of the King of the Jews. Understandably, His life was recorded by thousands of followers across the land."³

True, the Bible did not arrive by fax from heaven. But its prophetic integrity attests to the truth that its authors were inspired by God to write. No other writings on earth possess the prophetic nature of the Bible. The Bible has the supernatural earmarks of God's hand upon its words. That cannot be said for any other writings, and certainly not for the so-called "gospels" that contradict what the Bible says.⁴

Nor did Jesus found "new philosophies." His words, many of which were restatements of the Hebrew prophets, affirmed the original faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Men have used His name throughout the centuries to found new philosophies, but none of those philosophies may be attributed directly to Jesus.

Who is Martyn Percy, "the great canon doctor"?

The only real, living person named in The Da Vinci Code, Percy is formally known as the Rev. Dr. Canon Martyn Percy, Adjunct Professor of Theology and Principal of Ripon College Cuddesdon, Oxford, United Kingdom. You'll find his works promoted by The Center for Progressive Christianity which bills itself as "An approach to Christianity that is inclusive, innovative, informed." A perusal of their Web site shows them to be against Jesus Christ as the only way to God. And Percy's teachings fit their bill. In short, he is a liberal theologian whose concepts of Jesus and the Bible are nebulous at best, and fit the philosophy of The Da Vinci Code.

By calling Jesus the "prophesied Messiah," Teabing (read Brown) is not saying that this is a fact, but in view of his overall concept of Jesus, we must conclude that he is merely stating an accepted idea.

...Teabing paused to sip his tea and then placed the cup back on the mantel. More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John among them."

"Who chose which gospels to include?" Sophie asked.

"Aha!" Teabing burst in with enthusiasm. "The fundamental irony of Christianity! The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great."

"I thought Constantine was a Christian," Sophie said.

"Hardly," Teabing scoffed. "He was a lifelong pagan who was baptized on his deathbed, too weak to protest. In Constantine's day, Rome's official religion was sun worship—the cult of Sol Invictus, or the Invincible Sun—and Constantine was its head priest. Unfortunately for him, a growing religious turmoil was gripping Rome. Three centuries after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, Christ's followers had multiplied exponentially. Christians and pagans began warring, and the conflict grew to such proportions that it threatened to rend Rome in two. Constantine decided something had to be done. In 325 A.D., he decided to unify Rome under a single religion. Christianity."

Sophie was surprised. "Why would a pagan emperor choose Christianity as the official religion?"

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 250-251.

4 For an in-depth explanation of the trustworthy nature of the Bible see *What Do You Believe? Why Do You Believe It?* (Redmond, WA: Sword Publishers, 2004).

Teabing chuckled. "Constantine was a very good businessman. He could see that Christianity was on the rise and he simply backed the winning horse. Historians still marvel at the brilliance with which Constantine converted the sun worshipping pagans to Christianity. By fusing pagan symbols, dates, and rituals into the growing Christian tradition, he created a kind of hybrid religion that was acceptable to both parties."

"Transmogrification," Langdon said. "The vestiges of pagan religion in Christian symbology are undeniable. Egyptian sun disks became the halos of Catholic saints. Pictograms of Isis nursing her miraculously conceived son Horus became the blueprint for our modern images of the Virgin Mary nursing Baby Jesus. And virtually all the elements of the Catholic ritual—the miter, the altar, the doxology, and communion, the act of 'God-eating'—were taken directly from earlier pagan mystery religions."

Teabing groaned. "Don't get a symbologist started on Christian icons. Nothing in Christianity is original. The pre-Christian God Mithras—called the Son of God and the Light of the World—was born on December 25, died, was buried in a rock tomb, and then resurrected in three days. By the way, December 25 is also the birthday of Osiris, Adonis, and Dionysus. The newborn Krishna was presented with gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Even Christianity's weekly holy day was stolen from the pagans."

"What do you mean?"

"Originally," Langdon said, "Christianity honored the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday, but Constantine shifted it to coincide with the pagan's veneration day of

the sun." He paused, grinning. "To this day, most churchgoers attend services on Sunday morning with no idea that they are there on account of the pagan sun god's weekly tribute—Sunday."

Sophie's head was spinning. "And all of this relates to the Grail?"

"Indeed," Teabing said. "Stay with me. During this fusion of religions, Constantine needed to strengthen the new Christian tradition, and held a famous ecumenical gathering known as the Council of Nicaea."

Sophie had heard of it only insofar as its being the birthplace of the Nicene Creed.

"At this gathering," Teabing said, "many aspects of Christianity were debated and voted upon—the date of Easter, the role of the bishops, the administration of sacraments, and, of course, the divinity of Jesus."

"I don't follow. His divinity?"

"My dear," Teabing declared, "until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet...a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A mortal."

"Not the Son of God?"

"Right," Teabing said. "Jesus' establishment as 'the Son of God' was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea."

"Hold on. You're saying Jesus' divinity was the result of a vote?"

"A relatively close vote at that," Teabing added. "Nonetheless, establishing Christ's divinity was critical to the further unification of the Roman empire and to the new Vatican power base. By officially endorsing Jesus as the Son of God, Constantine turned Jesus into a deity who existed beyond the scope of the human world, an

entity whose power was unchallengeable. This not only precluded further pagan challenges to Christianity, but now the followers of Christ were able to redeem themselves only via the established sacred channel—the Roman Catholic Church."

Sophie glanced at Langdon, and he gave her a soft nod of concurrence.

"It was all about power," Teabing continued. "Christ as Messiah was critical to the functioning of Church and state. Many scholars claim that the early Church literally stole Jesus from His original followers, hijacking His human message, shrouding it in an impenetrable cloak of divinity, and using it to expand their own power.⁵"

This is a mouthful, and it isn't over. Brown is correct in enumerating some of the pagan influences within Roman Catholicism (and which persist today in some Protestant churches). His statement that Isis nursing Horus became the "blueprint for our modern images of the Virgin Mary nursing Baby Jesus" is true. So what? Because some artists took those images as models for their works does not negate the more important truths of the Lord Jesus' life and ministry.

It is also true that the Roman Catholic Church took December 25 as Jesus' birth date from Roman paganism. Again, so what? That doesn't negate the truth. The important thing is that He was born.

And if there is anything Satan likes to do, it is counterfeit the truth. Of course his deceptions are going to take things that relate to the true God and use them to promote the worship of false gods. This is why there are some similarities between these pagan beliefs and true faith in the living God.

We've written of these things ourselves in the past. The problem is that Brown, as do many ignorant people,

5 *The Da Vinci Code, Op. Cit.*, pp. 251-253.

equates Roman Catholicism with the earliest Christianity. There is no denying that the faith was usurped and perverted by men seeking power over the righteous. But the truths about Jesus as the Son of God—the Word of God who became a man—date back to the time He walked the earth.

CHRISTIANITY VS. PAGANISM?

At the time Constantine became emperor there was no power struggle between the pagan Romans and Christians. Christians were not “warring” against the pagans. They largely went to their deaths without resistance. They were still being persecuted and the pagan religion of Rome was dominant when Constantine came to power. There was no compelling reason for Constantine to take the side of Christianity against the pagan religion of Rome. On the contrary, the natural inclination would have been to maintain the status quo and continue allowing Christians to be persecuted. Historian Edward Gibbon gives no quarter to Constantine regarding his vacillation between his pagan roots and his new-found Christianity during the early stages of his reign while still only a ruler subject to the higher power of Maximin. After Maximin’s death, Constantine’s power was solidified and he was more free to express his affinity toward Christianity. But until he attained full status as emperor of a largely pagan nation, yet desiring to treat all subjects with equity, he placated the pagans with homage to their gods on one hand, while taking care to protect the Christians on the other:

As long as Constantine exercised a limited sovereignty over the provinces of Gaul, his Christian subjects were protected by the authority, and perhaps by the laws, of a prince, who wisely left to the gods the care of vindicating their own honor. If we may credit the assertion of Constantine himself, he had been an indignant

spectator of the savage cruelties which were inflicted, by the hands of Roman soldiers, on those citizens whose religion was their only crime.... [Constantine] immediately suspended or repealed the edicts of persecution, and granted the free exercise of their religious ceremonies to all those who had already professed themselves members of the church. They were soon encouraged to depend on the favour as well as on the justice of their sovereign, who had imbibed a secret and sincere reverence for the name of Christ, and for the God of the Christians.⁶

This isn’t to say that Constantine was a model Christian, or even if he was a true disciple of Jesus. It is merely to point out the fallacious proposition that Constantine was a devout pagan who merely wanted to bring peace to his realm by adopting Christianity as the rising power within the Roman Empire.

Did Constantine Reject Baptism?

There is ample reason to believe that Constantine’s faith was suspect, or at least lacking in many areas. The institutionalization of Christianity under his protectorate served to demean the faith and render it largely powerless spiritually if certainly not temporally. But the claims of Brown that he did not at least believe that his faith was genuine, and that he was a devout pagan his entire life, being baptized by the Roman Catholic Church against his will when he was too weak to protest is a fabrication. There is no reliable historical evidence to suggest this. Rather, he deferred his baptism because he knew he was not sufficiently perfected in his profession of Christianity and feared a relapse. The renowned historian, Edward Gibbon, reveals that Constantine requested baptism.

As he gradually advanced in the knowledge of truth, he propor-

tionably declined in the practice of virtue; and the same year of his reign in which he convened the council of Nice was polluted by the execution, or rather murder, of his eldest son [Crispus]. This date is alone sufficient to refute the ignorant and malicious suggestions of Zosimus who affirms that, after the death of Crispus, the remorse of his father accepted from the ministers of Christianity the expiation which he had vainly solicited from the Pagan [priests]. At the time of the death of Crispus the emperor could no longer hesitate in the choice of a religion; he could no longer be ignorant that the church was possessed of an infallible remedy, though he chose to defer the application of it till the approach of death had removed the temptation and danger of a relapse. The bishops whom he summoned in his last illness to the palace of Nicomedia were edified by the fervour with which he requested and received the sacrament of baptism, by the solemn protestation that the remainder of his life should be worthy of a disciple of Christ, and by his humble refusal to wear the Imperial purple after he had been clothed in the white garment of a Neophyte.⁷

The Encyclopaedia Britannica concurs:

The emperor was an earnest student of his religion. Even before the defeat of Licinius, he had summoned to Trier the theologian and polemicist Lactantius to be the tutor of Crispus. In later years he commissioned new copies of the Bible for the growing congregations at Constantinople. He composed a special prayer for his troops and went on campaigns with a mobile chapel in a tent. He issued numerous laws relating to

6 Edward Gibbon, Esq., *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. II (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier, 1899), pp. 251-252.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 272-273.

Christian practice and susceptibilities: for instance, abolishing the penalty of crucifixion and the practice of branding certain criminals; enjoining the observance of Sunday and saints' days; and extending privileges to the clergy while suppressing at least some of offensive pagan practices.

Constantine had hoped to be baptized in the Jordan River, but perhaps because of the lack of opportunity to do so—together possibly with the reflection that his office necessarily involved responsibility for actions hardly compatible with the baptized state—he delayed the ceremony until the end of his life. It was while preparing for a campaign against Persia that he fell ill at Helenopolis. When treatment failed, he made to return to Constantinople but was forced to take to his bed near Nicomedia. There, Constantine received baptism, putting off the imperial purple for the white robes of a neophyte; and he died in 337. He was buried at Constantinople in his church of the Apostles, whose memorials, six on each side, flanked his tomb. Yet this was less an expression of religious megalomania than of Constantine's literal conviction that he was the successor of the evangelists, having devoted his life and office to the spreading of Christianity.⁸

Constantine's ambiguity was at best the result of his deference to the accepted norms of his empire. He did not retain pagan beliefs himself, but, contrary to his earlier policies under Maximin, banned most pagan practices, while allowing minor observances.

The reign of Constantine must be interpreted against the background of his personal commit-

ment to Christianity. His public actions and policies, however, were not entirely without ambiguity. Roman opinion expected of its emperors not innovation but the preservation of traditional ways; Roman propaganda and political communication were conditioned, by statement, allusion, and symbol, to express these expectations. It is significant, for instance, not that the pagan gods and their legends survived for a few years on Constantine's coinage but that they disappeared so quickly: the last of them, the relatively inoffensive "Unconquered Sun," was eliminated just over a decade after the defeat of Maxentius.

Some of the ambiguities in Constantine's public policies were therefore exacted by the respect due to established practice and by the difficulties of expressing, as well as of making, total changes suddenly. The suppression of paganism, by law and by the sporadic destruction of pagan shrines, is balanced by particular acts of deference. A town in Asia Minor mentioned the unanimous Christianity of its inhabitants in support of a petition to the emperor; while, on the other hand, one in Italy was allowed to hold a local festival incorporating gladiatorial games and to found a shrine of the imperial dynasty—although direct religious observance there was firmly forbidden. In an early law of Constantine, priests and public soothsayers of Rome were prohibited entry to private houses; but another law, of 320 or 321, calls for their recital of prayer "in the manner of ancient observance" if the imperial palace or any other public building were struck by lightning. Traditional country magic

was tolerated by Constantine. Classical culture and education, which were intimately linked with paganism, continued to enjoy enormous prestige and influence; provincial priesthods, which were as intimately linked with civic life, long survived the reign of Constantine.⁹

So we see that Constantine did not eschew baptism because he was a devout pagan as Brown asserts. But this is not the only area in which Brown deliberately speaks contrary to the truth about Constantine's role in establishing biblical doctrine.

DID CONSTANTINE DECLARE JESUS DIVINE?

The idea that Constantine somehow ruled the "church" and that he was personally responsible for creating the Bible and declaring Jesus divine is pure drivel containing no historical validity. The belief in Jesus' divinity was an accepted truth throughout Christianity from the time of the apostles.

The writings of His disciples consistently affirmed His divinity. It has been generally accepted throughout history that the Gospel of Matthew was written sometime around A.D. 37, just a few years after Jesus walked the earth. This eyewitness account of Jesus' life and ministry says this:

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up quickly out of the water. And, look, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him.

And look, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt 3:16-17)

Matthew's Gospel also attests that Peter declared Jesus to be the Son of God. And Jesus not only did not oppose him, He called Peter blessed for stating what God had revealed to him:

8 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, sv. Constantine I.

9 *Ibid.*

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, saying, "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?"

And they said, "Some say that You are John the Baptist, some, Elias, and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

He said to them, "But whom do you say that I am?"

And Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And Jesus answered and said to him, You are blessed Simon Bar Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 16:13-17)

This earliest eye-witness account tells us that Jesus Himself acknowledged that He is the Son of God. The Jews understood that this particular appellation applied only to divinity. This is attested by another eye-witness account of the unbelieving Jews charging Jesus with blasphemy for making Himself God:

And the high priest arose, and said to Him, "You answer nothing? What is it that these witness against You?"

But Jesus held His peace. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I command you under oath by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God."

Jesus said to him, "You have said. Nevertheless, I say to you, 'Hereafter You shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.'"

Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have for witnesses? Look now, you have heard His blasphemy!" (Matthew 26:62-65)

The following exchange, recorded by John and written around A.D. 90—long before the Gnostic "gospels" came into

existence—is also an eyewitness account of Jesus declaring His divinity:

Then the Jews came round about Him, and said to Him, "How long do You make us doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."

Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you did not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of me. But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. Neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.

"My Father, who gave them to Me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand.

"I and my Father are one."

Then the Jews again took up stones to stone Him.

Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from my Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"

The Jews answered Him, saying, "We do not stone you for a good work, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a man, make Yourself God."

Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, You are gods?'"

"If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken, do you say of Him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, 'You blaspheme,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God?'"

"If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me. But if I do, even though you do not believe, believe the works, so that you may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him." (John 10:24-38)

I must digress to clear up any misunderstanding. Jesus' quote, "I said, 'You are gods,'" is not affirmation of the divin-

ity of all men. He was quoting from Psalms 82:6-7:

"I have said, 'You are gods, and all of you are children of the most High. But you shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.'"

Jesus was being facetious. The Hebrew word translated "gods" is *elohim*, which applied not only to God, but to the rulers and judges of Israel, God's chosen nation through which He would send His Son. All Israelites were considered sons of God by birthright. But they lost that birthright through unrighteousness. This is why God told them they would die like men. If all men are divine, then why would God say that these men, who had a divine birthright, would die like men? The context is the chastisement of Israel's judges for failing to judge righteously, neglecting the poor and needy in favor of those who rewarded them for their judgments. Unfortunately, dishonest people have taken these words out of context and developed a doctrine of the universal divinity of mankind. This is what the Gnostics did.

Furthermore, to affirm Jesus' divinity, John, who testified of Jesus' words above, began His Gospel with the following declaration that is the benchmark of the Gospel.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and nothing was made without Him.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not perceive it....

That was the true Light, who enlightens every man that comes into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world did not know Him.

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, He gave them power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on

His name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-14)

When we see the truth of these earliest eye-witness accounts declaring Jesus divine and the Creator of all things, it is clear that Brown's claim is false that "until that moment in history" (when Constantine allegedly declared Jesus divine) He was viewed by His followers as nothing more than "a mortal prophet." That claim is a deliberate falsehood. Until Arianism arose in the middle of the fourth century the very earliest eyewitness accounts all affirmed Jesus' divinity.

Whether one wishes to believe the truth about Jesus' divinity, or wishes to be numbered among the unbelieving Jews that sought to stone Jesus, is up to each individual.

All four Gospels attest to Jesus' divinity. And not only the Gospels, but many of the apostles' letters to the believers throughout the world attested to His divinity.

Writing around A.D. 59, Paul wrote to the Roman Christians the following:

For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh—and for sin—condemned sin in the flesh. (Romans 8:3)

Even liberal scholars agree that Paul wrote the Book of Romans before A.D. 60.

Written sometime between A.D. 50 and 80, Paul's letter to the Colossian Christians says this:

...giving thanks to the Father, who has made us suitable to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins—who is the

image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.

For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers. All things were created by Him, and for Him, and He existed before all things, and by Him all things consist.

And He is the head of the body, the called out, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence.

For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell....

Beware lest any man seduce you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the God-head bodily." (Colossians 1:12-19; 2:8-9)

These are only a few of myriad accounts in both the Gospels and the Epistles (letters) to the Christians written by various apostles, which validate that the earliest Christians believed in the divinity of Jesus.

Long before Constantine, the Council of Nicaea, and the Roman Catholic Church, those who received the faith directly from the apostles wrote of Jesus' divinity. Ignatius of Antioch closed his letter to Polycarp with these words:

I bid you farewell always in our God Jesus Christ, in whom you abide in the unity and supervision of God. I salute Alce, a name very dear to me. Farewell in the Lord. (Emphasis added)

Like most of the apostles, and many disciples of Jesus, Ignatius gave his life for his testimony. His predecessors were not fools. If they, being eye-witnesses of Jesus' life and ministry, knew they were lying, they would not have given their lives for something they knew to be untrue. But they went to their deaths, some to prison, avowing that their testimonies were true.

It is telling that, while there are many early Christian leaders who can be named that attested to Jesus' divinity, prior to Arius who arose in the fourth century, there are no major figures who can be named that stated otherwise.

Are we to believe these men of integrity who lent their names to their dangerous testimonies, or some anonymous members of a particular cult who wrote as much as three centuries later?

THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

Getting back to this fiction's claim that Constantine ruled over the Council of Nicaea and forced the decision upon it to declare Jesus divine, history refutes it.

To begin, we must understand that we are referring to Constantine I, emperor of Rome, not Pope Constantine who reigned over the Roman Catholic Church from A.D. 708 - 715. Constantine I was never a pope, as some have thought. However, contrary to the assertions of skeptics, Constantine I was avid in his Christian faith as he understood it within the context of the emerging hierarchical institution.

As emperor of a nation comprised of varied religious traditions, Constantine took a largely secular approach to his duties. While favoring Christianity, he nonetheless understood the need to protect and placate his non-Christian subjects. His reign was not a theocracy. Yet it was upon his commitment to his Christian beliefs that he convened the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 in order to have Christian leaders from throughout his realm come to consensus on certain issues that were in dispute.

Through the early centuries, long before Constantine and the Catholic Church came into existence, many Christian leaders affirmed the divinity of Jesus. However, during the third century, during the time that hierarchical forces were gaining strength to eventually devolve into a "universal" or "catholic" church, there arose Arius, a religious leader in Alexandria, born in Egypt, who denied the divinity of Jesus and asserted that He was a created being, no more than human. He was able to garner a following suffi-

cient enough to challenge the accepted belief in Jesus' divinity.

Arius taught that the Father (God) had created the Logos as one of His qualities or powers through which He created the universe. He asserted that the Son was not to be identified with the Godhead, being only a "god" in the derivative sense, that is, that He was derived or created by the Father for a specific purpose. Since there was a time that He did not exist He cannot be eternal.

It was primarily to confront the Arian teachings that the Council of Nicaea was convened. Arianism bears some resemblance to gnosticism, and arose about the same time that the so-called Gnostic "gospels" were being written.

Interestingly, although Brown wishes to paint Constantine as a manipulator to force the doctrine of Christ's divinity upon the "church," prior to the Council Constantine saw no problem with Arius's teachings.

...Constantine understood his own age because he shared its heathen institutions and its heathen class-feeling; and Christianity to him was nothing more than a monotheistic heathenism. Arianism therefore came up to his ideal of religion, and he could not see what was lacking in it. The whole question seemed a mere affair of words.

But if the emperor had no special theological interest in the matter, he could not overlook its political importance. Old experiences warned him of the danger of a stir in Egypt; and he had himself seen with what difficulty the revolt of Achilleus had been crushed. These Arian songs might cause a bloody tumult any day at Alexandria; and if the Christians went down into the streets, they

could hardly be allowed to fight it out like Jews....

In this temper Constantine approached the Arian difficulty. His first step was to send Hosius of Cordova to Alexandria with a characteristic letter to Alexander and Arius. It presents "a strange mixture of a master's pride, a Christian's submission, and a statesman's disdain" (Broglie) But the very strangeness of the document guarantees its sincerity. If Eusebius of Nicomedia had any hand in its despatch (sic), he cannot have done more than give the final impulse to the emperor's purposes. Constantine treats the dispute as a mere word-battle about mysteries beyond our reach, arising out of an over-curious question asked by Alexander, and a rash answer given by Arius. They were agreed on essentials, and ought to forgive each other the past as our holy religion enjoins, and for the future to avoid these vulgar quarrels.¹⁰

Failing to bring about reconciliation between Alexander and Arius, Constantine decided to convene a council of "bishops" (overseers of congregations) to settle the dispute. Contrary to Brown's claim that Jesus' divinity was decided by "a relatively close vote," there were only two dissenters, including Arius. The Council of Nicaea ruled overwhelmingly against Arianism and for the doctrine of Jesus' divinity.

Once the Council ruled, Constantine backed off his support of Arius and supported the decision completely. His aim was to stave off a major schism that could wreak political havoc within his empire. Yet it took over fifty years for Arianism to be sufficiently subjugated. During that time Constantine's son, Constantius, favored Arianism.¹¹

Although Brown claims that "historians" and/or "scholars" agree to what he asserts, his unnamed "historians" and "scholars" are at odds with what is verifiable.

Of course, Brown argues that history is written by the conquerors, so the true history has been lost. But if that's true, how did he learn it? And what are his sources? All his arguments are from silence. Hardly worth putting one's trust in.

GNOSTIC 'GOSPELS' SUPERIOR?

Dan Brown claims that the four Gospels of the Bible are merely a small sampling of some eighty total gospels, and that those four were included in the canon of Scripture at the expense of all the others because the "Church" wanted to suppress the truth that Jesus was a mere mortal. This claim lies at the heart of all the other claims about Jesus and his alleged marriage, as well as his nature as a mere mortal.

"The twist is this," Teabing said, talking faster now. "Because Constantine upgraded Jesus' status almost four centuries after Jesus' death, thousands of documents already existed chronicling His life as a mortal man. To rewrite the history books, Constantine knew he would need a bold stroke. From this sprang the most profound moment in Christian history." Teabing paused, eyeing Sophie. "Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ's human traits and embellished those gospels that made Him godlike. The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned."¹²

It is true that Constantine commissioned Bibles to be published for the benefit of his subjects. But the Gospels of

10 Henry Melvill Swatkin, M.A., *Studies of Arianism: Chiefly Referring to the Character and Chronology of the Reaction Which Followed the Council of Nicaea* (Cambridge: Deighton Bell and Co., 1900), pp.36-38.

11 *Ibid.*

12 *The Da Vinci Code, Op. Cit.*, p. 254.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were accepted as authentic by the earliest Christians. They are the earliest eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life and ministry. By saying, "the earlier gospels were outlawed," Brown has deliberately distorted historical fact. The Gnostic "gospels" which he champions, were not "the earlier gospels." They were written no less than one hundred years after Jesus walked the earth, and most long after that. In contrast, the four Gospels of the Bible were written from A.D. 37 (Matthew) to A.D. 90 (John). Not only that, these are eye-witness accounts of Jesus' life and ministry, and were accepted by the earliest Christians, many of whom were also eyewitnesses. That they were written by the authors to whom they are credited is further evidenced by the fact that their authorship was never challenged by the first-century Christians, many of whom knew them personally. There are no first-century accounts that contradict or even challenge these four Gospels' accounts.

In view of the historically verifiable antagonism against Jesus and His followers by the established powers of the Jews in Jesus' day, there should be myriad written accounts contradicting the Gospels. There are none.

Rabbinical Judaism has its "traditions" that call Jesus the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier, as much later written in the Talmud, but there are no compelling eye-witness accounts to challenge the Gospels.

Which would an objective observer accept as more accurate—the earliest eye-witness accounts, or those anonymous writings of a peculiar humanistic cult written centuries later to promote their particular philosophy?

The Da Vinci Code clearly intends to convince the reader that "the earlier gospels" were written before, and were more reliable than, the four Gospels in the Bible. But again, the Gnostic "gospels" do not predate the four Gospels. Nor do

they possess any prophetic integrity. They neither confirm any fulfilled prophecy or make any prophecies, let alone any that have been fulfilled. They are not eye-witness accounts; they are peculiarly Gnostic.

For a brief explanation of gnosticism see page 17.

THE PRIORY OF SION

One of the main themes of The Da Vinci Code is that an ancient secret society known as the "Priory of Sion" holds the key to finding the Holy Grail. Robert Langdon explains about the Priory of Sion to Sophie Neveu:

"I've written about this group," he said, his voice tremulous with excitement. "Researching the symbols of secret societies is a specialty of mine. They call themselves the Prieuré de Sion—the Priory of Sion. They're based here in France and attract powerful members from all over Europe. In fact, they are one of the oldest surviving secret societies on earth."

Sophie had never heard of them.

Langdon was talking in rapid bursts now. "The Priory's membership has included some of history's most cultured individuals: men like Botticelli, Sir Isaac Newton, Victor Hugo." He paused, his voice brimming now with academic zeal. "And, Leonardo Da Vinci."

Sophie stared. "Da Vinci was in a secret society?"

"Da Vinci presided over the Priory between 1510 and 1519 as the brotherhood's Grand Master, which might help explain your grandfather's passion for Leonardo's work. The two men share a historical fraternal bond. And it all fits perfectly with their fascination for goddess iconology, paganism, feminine deities, and contempt for the Church. The Priory has a

well-documented history of reverence for the sacred feminine."

"You're telling me this group is a pagan goddess worship cult?"

"More like the pagan goddess worship cult. But more important, they are known as the guardians of an ancient secret. One that made them immeasurably powerful."¹³

Sounds convincing. But is it true? Is all this a matter of "well-documented history"?

Well, there really was a Priory of Sion which was a Catholic monastic order located at the monastery of Our Lady of Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. After transferring its headquarters to Sicily, it was absorbed into the Jesuit order in 1617. It had nothing to do with the Knights Templars or any secret society. The idea that it did, or still does, came about as the result of an elaborate hoax perpetrated in 1956.

Both the BBC and CBS did special programs debunking the idea of the Priory of Sion as a secret society after the order described in The Da Vinci Code. Their investigations, as well as many others by independent historians, conclude that there is no truth to Dan Brown's claims. The following excerpts from 60 Minutes reveal the truth:

On a page headed "Fact," Dan Brown says that the Priory of Sion, which is central to the secret at the heart of his book, is a real organization. He says that at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris — the French National Library — you can find proof that it was founded in Jerusalem at the time of the Crusades. That proof is in some documents known as the Dossiers Secrets or Secret Files.

So 60 Minutes decided to check out those Secret Files. The Bibliothèque Nationale made exact copies for the 60 Minutes team to look at because they said the originals were too fragile to handle.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

We soon found what we were looking for. One document gives the history of the Priory of Sion dating back to the 12th Century, and there's a list of Grand Masters that includes such illustrious names as Sir Isaac Newton and Leonardo Da Vinci. This information would be astounding – except for one thing.

"I do know what was going on in Jerusalem in the 12th Century, I do know. I spent 40 years working on it and what these people say – did not happen," says Jonathan Riley-Smith, the former professor of ecclesiastical history at Cambridge University and a leading authority on the Crusades.¹⁴

French researchers have questioned the authenticity of these secret files ever since they were deposited in the Bibliothèque Nationale in the 1960's by one Pierre Plantard. 60 Minutes continues:

During World War II Plantard was investigated by the secret services with the conclusion that "He is a young man whose mind—as we say in French—is cloudy. He is a fantasist; he is not a serious person,"¹⁵

One of Plantard's fantasies was to set up right-wing, anti-Semitic organizations, similar in style to medieval orders of chivalry. But in reality these organizations existed only on paper.

Plantard claimed that his organization, French National Renewal, had 3,000 members. Police determined that it had only four.

In 1953 Plantard was given a six-month sentence for fraud, but three years later, he was again setting up a new organization, the Priory of Sion. Ten years later he gave the Priory of Sion a fictitious

pedigree by forging what appeared to be ancient documents naming a list of Grand Masters and depositing it in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Historian Claude Charlot, director of police archives, Paris, France, says that apart from that list, no historian has found any evidence that the Priory of Sion as a secret society with such eminent Grand Masters ever existed before Plantard set up his version in 1956.

"In other words, all that Plantard tells us, or what other people tell us about the Priory of Sion – that the Grand Master was Victor Hugo or Leonardo Da Vinci – is sheer invention," says Charlot.¹⁶

But if the Priory of Sion was just a figment of Pierre Plantard's imagination, what about those parchments that mentioned Sion and were supposedly found by the priest [Abbe Saunière] in his church at Rennes Le Chateau? Bill Putnam and John Edwin Wood who have written a book about the mystery say the text in one of the parchments precludes them from being genuine.

"This one uses a Latin version of the Bible, the Vulgate. There are a number of known versions of this at various times in history and by looking exactly at which words are used and which words are not used you can tell which version it is," Putnam explains.

Putnam says this is the version of the Bible used. The only trouble is, it wasn't published until 1889, and [Abbe] Saunière was supposed to have found these centuries-old parchments well before that date.

"So it could not possibly have been around had these parch-

ments really been discovered by Saunière prior to that date," says Putnam.

Putnam says it was all just an elaborate hoax.

Putnam and Wood say once again it was Plantard who was responsible for that hoax. Hearing of the story of Rennes Le Chateau, he decided to use it for his own ends and turned to a friend named Philippe de Cherisey for help in creating those parchments.

"Philippe de Cherisey was a different character altogether. He was something of a joker. He'd actually been an actor and had played parts in French television and he was fond of puzzles. And he invented the parchments because he liked puzzles," says John Edwin Wood....¹⁷

In spite of these verified facts debunking the Priory of Sion and the Dossiers Secrets, Brown states:

...previous Priory Grand Masters had also been distinguished public figures with artistic souls. Proof of that fact had been uncovered years ago in Paris's Bibliothèque Nationale in papers that became known as Les Dossiers Secrets.

Every Priory historian and Grail buff had read the Dossiers. Cataloged under Number 4° IM1 249, the Dossiers Secrets had been authenticated by many specialists and incontrovertibly confirmed what historians had suspected for a long time: Priory Grand Masters included Leonardo Da Vinci, Botticelli, Sir Isaac Newton, Victor Hugo, and, more recently, Jean Cocteau, the famous Parisian artist.¹⁸

14 "The Priory of Sion, Is The 'Secret Organization' Fact or Fiction?", *60 Minutes* (CBS News, April 30, 2006).

15 Historian Claude Charlot, director of police archives, Paris, France, *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.*

18 Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code Op. Cit.*, p. 224.

At first, when the Dossiers Secrets were given to the Bibliothèque Nationale by Plantard, they were received as genuine historical documents. But long before Brown wrote *The Da Vinci Code* they had been declared forgeries and discredited. Yet Brown gives them the imprimatur of “many specialists,” (unnamed) who “incontrovertibly confirmed” something that was never true. What he has done is mix fact with fiction and called it all “fact.” Yes, there was a Priory of Sion in the Middle Ages. But the documents describing the Holy Grail that Brown ascribes to the original Priory are a forgery of Plantard and de Cherisey, creators of the modern “Priory.” They sought to create the idea that Plantard was a descendant of Jesus Christ by planting the Dossiers Secrets with the Bibliothèque Nationale.

Technically, Brown is telling the truth when he says, “All descriptions of...documents...in this novel are accurate.” Yes, the documents exist as described, but they are forgeries. Yet people trust that he is telling the truth when he links those forged documents to a defunct monastic order that dissolved centuries ago. So if it is not a truth, told deliberately to mislead, is it not a lie?

DID JESUS MARRY MARY?

The idea that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were wed stems from one passage in a Gnostic text entitled *The Gospel of Philip*:

And the companion of the [...] Mary Magdalene. [...] more than [...] the disciples, [...] kiss her [...] on her [...]. The rest of the disciples [...]. They said to him “Why do you love her more than all of us?” The Savior answered and said to them, “Why do I not love you like her? When a blind man and one who sees are both together in darkness, they are no different from one another. When the light comes, then he who sees will see the light, and he who is blind will remain in darkness.”

The elipses within the brackets indicate areas where the text is missing. In some cases the missing words amount to entire paragraphs and more. Translators have inserted the words “lips,” or “mouth” after the words “kiss her [...] on her.” This fragmented document leaves us with the question, “who kissed whom, where?” The context seems to indicate that “the Savior” loved Mary Magdalene more than He did His male disciples. But did He kiss her on her mouth, or on her forehead, or on her hand? This proves nothing.

The main argument for Jesus and Mary being wed rests on the word “companion.” As Teabing says in Brown’s novel, “As any Aramaic scholar will tell you, the word companion, in those days, literally meant spouse.”

Is this true? Elsewhere in *The Gospel of Philip* we find these words:

His three female companions were each named Mary (59,6-11), though he had an apparent preference for Mary Magdalene (63,32-36).

So Jesus had three female companions, including His mother! And this according to the same “gospel” Brown cites to prove his point. But the “gospel” of Philip proves one thing: the word companion did not necessarily mean spouse.

Also, there is no proof that this so-called “gospel” was written in Aramaic:

Scholars debate whether the original language was Syriac or Greek. James Robinson, the text’s translator, places the date in the 2nd half of the 3rd century and places its origin in Syria due to the traces of Syriac words, eastern baptismal practices and the ascetic outlook.¹⁹

So this was written some 200 years after Jesus was on the earth. Yet Brown says that these Gnostic “gospels” predate the four Gospels of the Bible.

Poor Etymology To “Prove” A Lie

Brown often makes claims that place Christ or Christianity in a bad light, using bogus claims to justify them. In one case he alleges that “the Church” feared the pagans and perverted words in order to render them evil:

Nowadays the term pagan had become almost synonymous with devil worship—a gross misconception. The word’s roots actually reached back to the Latin *paganus*, meaning country-dwellers. “Pagans” were literally unindoctrinated country-folk who clung to the old, rural religions of Nature worship. In fact, so strong was the Church’s fear of those who lived in the rural viles that the once innocuous word for “villager”—*vilain*—came to mean a wicked soul.²⁰

In truth, the French aristocracy considered those living in rural areas to be of lower rank, and thus, brutish or violent. The etymology of the word *villain*, does not indict the “Church.” The On-line Etymological Dictionary says this about “*villain*”:

“base or low-born rustic,” from Anglo-Fr. and O.Fr. *villain*, from M.L. *villanus* “farmhand,” from L. *villa* “country house”

“The most important phases of the sense development of this word may be summed up as follows: ‘inhabitant of a farm; peasant; churl, boor; clown; miser; knave, scoundrel.’ Today both Fr. *vilain* and Eng. *villain* are used only in a pejorative sense.” [Klein]

Meaning “character in a novel, play, etc. whose evil motives or actions help drive the plot” is from 1822. *Villainous* is recorded from c.1300, from O.Fr. *vileneus*; *villainy* (c.1225) is from O.Fr. *vilanie*.

The etymology for the word “pagan” refutes Brown’s claim that “the Church” changed its meaning:

19 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Philip

20 *Ibid.*, p. 39.

c.1375, from L.L. *paganus* "pagan," in classical L. "villager, rustic, civilian," from *pagus* "rural district," originally "district limited by markers," thus related to *pangere* "to fix, fasten," from PIE base **pag-* "to fix" (see *pact*). Religious sense is often said to derive from conservative rural adherence to the old gods after the Christianization of Roman towns and cities; but the word in this sense predates that period in Church history, and it is more likely derived from the use of *paganus* in Roman military jargon for "civilian, incompetent soldier," which Christians (Tertullian, c.202; Augustine) picked up with the military imagery of the early Church (e.g. *militis* "soldier of Christ," etc.). Applied to modern pantheists and nature-worshippers from 1908. Paganism is attested from 1433.²¹ (Emphasis added)

We see how Brown takes a truth and turns it into a half-truth in order to vilify "the Church." It is true that paganism is not synonymous with devil worship, although many of the nature gods of differing pagan cultures are evil spirits that are to be placated with sacrifices. But that is the only part of Brown's statement that is indisputably true. The rest is speculation on his part at best.

THE DA VINCI FACTOR

As an alleged Grand Master of an alleged secret society known as the Priory of Sion, Leonardo da Vinci is said to have hidden clues to the Holy Grail in his art. Specifically, his famous "Last Supper" is said to be encoded with clues revealing Mary Magdalene as the Holy Grail.

To debunk the idea that the Holy Grail is the cup from which Jesus drank, Brown has Teabing showing Sophie a picture of The Last Supper in the book, *La Storia di Leonardo*. He then tells her to

close her eyes and imagine the scene. After asking Sophie what food Jesus and His disciples were breaking, eating and drinking, to which she answered correctly, bread and wine, he asks, "How many wineglasses are on the table?"

Sophie paused, realizing it was the trick question. And after dinner, Jesus took the cup of wine, sharing it with His disciples. "One cup," she said. "The chalice." The Cup of Christ. The Holy Grail. "Jesus passed a single chalice of wine, just as modern Christians do at communion."

Teabing sighed. "Open your eyes."

She did. Teabing was grinning smugly. Sophie looked down at the painting, seeing to her astonishment that everyone at the table had a glass of wine, including Christ. Thirteen cups. Moreover, the cups were tiny, stemless, and made of glass. There was no chalice in the painting. No Holy Grail.

Teabing's eyes twinkled. "A bit strange, don't you think, considering that both the Bible and our standard Grail legend celebrate this moment as the definitive arrival of the Holy Grail. Oddly, Da Vinci appears to have forgotten to paint the Cup of Christ."

"Surely art scholars must have noted that."

"You will be shocked to learn what anomalies Da Vinci included here that most scholars either do not see or simply choose to ignore. This fresco, in fact, is the entire key to the Holy Grail mystery. Da Vinci lays it all out in the open in *The Last Supper*."²²

There are two glaring misconceptions here. First, of course each disciple had his own cup. They were partaking of the Pass-

over supper, one element of which included wine. That does not preclude Jesus from sharing His cup at the end of the meal, which is what the Scriptures say.

Second, it is not "both" the Bible and the Grail legend that "celebrate this moment as the definitive arrival of the Holy Grail." The Bible has nothing to say about a "Holy Grail," simply because there is no such thing.

But these fallacious arguments are important to the myth perpetrated by Brown that the Holy Grail is not a cup or "chalice," but a person:

Sophie scanned the work eagerly. "Does this fresco tell us what the Grail really is?"

"Not what it is," Teabing whispered. "But rather who it is. The Holy Grail is not a thing. It is, in fact. . . a person."²³

After a protracted and elaborate explanation of male and female symbolism in art, traditionally ascribed to ancient, esoteric philosophy, Langdon states, "The Grail [the cup symbolized by a "V"] is literally the ancient symbol for womanhood, and the Holy Grail represents the sacred feminine and the goddess, which of course has now been lost, virtually eliminated by the Church." He asserts that the power of the feminine posed a threat to the male dominated "Church," so the sacred feminine was demonized.

We are told further that these "truths" were once deeply held by Christians and by Jesus Himself, but that the "Church" perverted them and turned what was once considered holy into something profane.

The "Christians" to whom The Da Vinci Code refers are the Gnostics whose "gospels" Brown champions at the expense of the true Gospels. And there is certainly no record that Jesus "deeply held" anything like these beliefs. His words recorded by His disciples contradict them.

21 *Online Etymological Dictionary*, s.v. "pagan," <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=pagan>.

22 *The Da Vinci Code*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 256.

23 *Ibid.*

The Last Supper

But just how does da Vinci's *The Last Supper* portray the Holy Grail as a woman rather than a literal cup? It is the portrayal of the apostle John who is depicted as seated at the right hand of Jesus, yet separated by their opposite leanings. The *Da Vinci Code* asserts that it is not really John whom da Vinci placed here, but Mary Magdalene. As proof, we are expected to see the effeminate nature of the figure who, with long hair and delicate face, also has "the hint of a bosom."

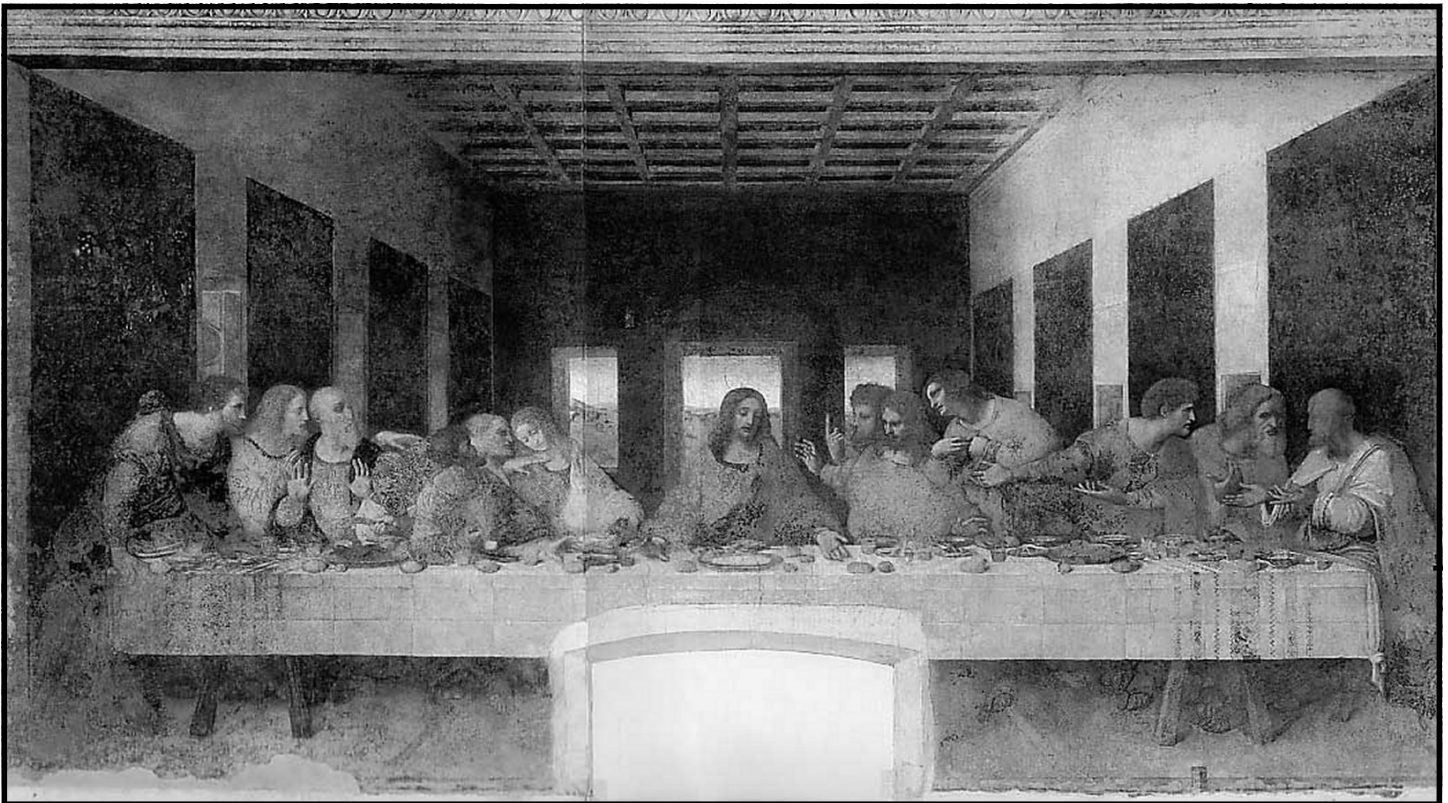
We have reproduced *The Last Supper* below, as well as a detail of "John" to illustrate.

Let me say, first, that I do not believe in "sacred art." There is no legitimate portrayal of Jesus or of His disciples. All are figments of artists' imaginations. However, it is one thing to portray a scene like the Last Supper, and another thing to interpret it from one's own imagination as well. Both the artist and those who interpret rely upon feelings. So let us look at the claims of *The Da Vinci Code*.

just take the mythmakers' word that "John" is really "Mary Magdalene." Nor can we take any other aspects of the myth to be true without the support of some form of empirical evidence. That evidence is sorely lacking.

But we should at least address these claims, as I am sure they will be forever cropping up in the future due to the impact of *The Da Vinci Code*.

To begin, Brown erroneously calls *The Last Supper* a "fresco." It is not a fresco. A fresco is a technique in which



The "V" created by the separation between "Jesus" and "John" is a definite departure from the overall symmetry of the picture. This is said to represent the sacred feminine and offer a clue to Mary Magdalene's presence in the place of John. And there is no doubt that John appears effeminate, but without a "hint of a bosom."

But did Leonardo da Vinci really intend to portray Mary Magdalene as the Holy Grail? Considering that the myth of da Vinci's role as a Grand Master of the Priory of Sion is a fabrication, and that the theory behind *The Last Supper* is based upon that fabrication, we cannot

the pigment must be applied quickly before the plaster dried to avoid any changes in the composition during the painting stages. A meticulous artist, and not wishing to be subject to time constraints, Leonardo developed his own technique using tempera on stone.

Is It John or Mary Magdalene?

Although the fourth figure from the left is difficult to ascertain in our poor reproduction, he is more discernible in the painting itself. Thus, there are a total of thirteen persons in the painting. We know that Jesus met with His twelve apostles, and in all accounts of the Last Supper there is no mention of anyone else present, let alone any women.

So why does “John” look so effeminate? An important consideration is that the painting as it exists today is to a large extent not what Leonardo painted. Numerous restorations throughout the centuries have resulted in what it is today. It is so far removed from the original except in perspective and basic outlines, that many art historians call it a “repainting” rather than a “restoration.”

James Beck, Art History Professor at Columbia University in New York, has been a prominent critic of the restoration. He has called it 18 to 20 percent Leonardo, and 80% the work of the restorer. Beck maintains that the areas that have been painted by Brambilla’s watercolor essentially repaints the masterpiece. He asserts that the painting does not represent a conservation of what remains of Da Vinci’s original, but represents a repainting of a work that doesn’t even have an echo of the past.²⁴

Nobody really knows exactly how Leonardo painted “John.” Reproduced here are details of “John” prior to, and after the latest restoration. Keep in mind that

no less than six restorations had already taken place prior to the last one in 1999.

If one looks at a better defined, large photo of “John” prior to the latest restoration one will see that he is definitely portrayed as masculine. But there is no doubt that the latest restoration renders him as more effeminate. Without getting into the heads of those who did the latest restoration, we have no idea why this is.

In fact, the latest restoration met with harsh criticism:

In the run-up to completing her restoration of Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Last Supper*, Dr. Pinin Barillon Brambilla attracted massive criticism. By all accounts, hers has been the most intolerant and hugely invasive restoration campaign imaginable. She has systematically banished every last trace of previous restorations, including Mauro Pelliccioli’s much-acclaimed work of 1951-54, thereby severing the historical continuity of the mural. In the process, she has also revealed vast amounts of bare wall, rendering necessary the single biggest repainting of the mural ever undertaken. In terms of its

artistic consequences, her own repainting merits harsh criticism: It is by turns feeble, half-hearted, intrusive, unhistorical, and inconsistent.²⁵

Even the colors that Leonardo originally employed have been compromised. Some restorers even used the wrong media in some instances.

Incredibly, Brown, via his fictional character Leigh Teabing, says this about the alleged depiction of Mary Magdalene in *The Last Supper*:

“Another reason you might have missed the woman,” Teabing said, “is that many of the photographs in art books were taken before 1954, when the details were still hidden beneath layers of grime and several restorative repaintings done by clumsy hands in the eighteenth century. Now, at last, the fresco has been cleaned down to Da Vinci’s original layer of paint.” He motioned to the photograph. “Et voilà!”

Sophie moved closer to the image. The woman to Jesus’ right was young and pious-looking, with a demure face, beautiful red hair, and hands folded quietly. This is the woman who singlehandedly could crumble the Church?²⁶

Brown has Teabing stating a bold-faced lie! The “fresco” was not “cleaned down to da Vinci’s original layer of paint.” The original layer of paint hardly even exists. What exists is paint over paint many times over. And the final coat has changed the appearance of “John” from masculine to feminine.

But what about the “V” which seems so prominent a separation between “John” and “Jesus”? Could this represent the sacred feminine that today’s Gnostics so vociferously state?



Left: “John” prior to latest restoration



Right: “John” after latest restoration

24 Community & the Humanities Dept., University of Pennsylvania, <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~lbianco/project/restoration.html>
 25 Abstract from Zwijnenberg, R., *The writings and drawings of Leonardo da Vinci : order and chaos in early modern thought*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), cited by The Leonardo da Vinci Society, Leonardo da Vinci Society Newsletter, editor: Francis Ames-Lewis, Issue 13, November 1998, <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/hosted/leonardo/newsnov1998.htm>
 26 *The Da Vinci Code, Op. Cit.*, p. 263.

To answer this we must see what Leonardo intended:

...the Last Supper's initial appearances as Christian iconography illustrated two main ideas handed down in the Gospel texts: reference to the betrayal of Jesus Christ and the counter-motif to the betrayal. These ideas were realized in prior portraits with the image of Jesus feeding his traitor, Judas, a piece of bread dipped in wine, and John reclining his head against the breast of the Lord. It was from this tradition, familiar to all predecessors, that Leonardo chose to depart. His conception of the theme was completely dominated by the idea of bringing out the announcement of the betrayal as the dramatic central motif.²⁷

This is why "John" is not seen leaning on "Jesus" as described in John 21:20.

Here is an interesting take on that verse which may cast some light on the situation. After His resurrection Jesus takes Peter aside and tells him how his life will end.

Then Peter, turning about, sees the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, "Lord, who is he that betrays You? (John 21:20)

Is it possible that Leonardo misread this verse? Did he take it to mean that John was leaning on Peter's breast ("his breast") at the Last Supper? I realize this is only speculation, but it is at least as worthy of consideration as all the inane speculation we find in Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*.

Considering that Leonardo painted "John" leaning on "Peter" in his depiction, it certainly seems plausible. But how do we know this is "John" and "Peter"? Because Leonardo da Vinci said so. The apostles depicted are, from left to right, Bartholomew, James the less, Andrew,

Judas, Peter, John, Thomas, James, Philip, Matthew, Thaddeus, and Simon. Twelve men, no women, according to Leonardo da Vinci.

Naturally, Brown and his defenders will say that Leonardo named them only to keep hidden the true identity of the Holy Grail, Mary Magdalene.

But consider: if it were a woman, why must it be Mary Magdalene? Why not the other Mary or her sister Martha? Because the speculation of Jesus marrying Mary Magdalene is a recent interpretation of the Gnostic "gospel" of Philip. An interpretation based upon a fragmented text generated by an anonymous member of a humanistic cult. There were no similar interpretations of the "gospel" of Philip extant prior to modern times.

It is obvious that this concept of Mary Magdalene being married to Jesus and surreptitiously depicted as the Holy Grail in Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* is nothing but pure fantasy. An elaborate scam perpetrated by the enemies of Christ Jesus to denigrate Him and to ridicule the faith He imparted to His followers.

Yet foolish people—gullible souls who want to believe in their own divinity—are buying into it in droves. Many, including professed Christians, believe this myth. They do not realize that they are imperiling their eternal destiny.

MORE OUTRAGEOUS CLAIMS

Historical novels are nothing new. James Michener is renowned for his historically accurate assimilation of fiction with fact. There are many who are faithful to history in their depiction of events and historical sites while integrating stories around fictional characters.

The *Da Vinci Code* is not one of them. It is fraught with unsubstantiated yet outrageous statements designed to give the impression that its premise rests on verifiable historic claims. Yet few of them are verifiable, and none are available that would support the important claims that

are designed to destroy faith in Jesus Christ and His divinity.

Teabing claims that Jesus Christ himself made the claim that Mary Magdalene is the Holy Grail.²⁸

Several times in *The Da Vinci Code* we are told that Jesus' marriage to Mary Magdalene is part of the historical record. But that is a flat-out lie. Except for a fragmented copy of *The Gospel of Philip*, which doesn't say they were married, but which translators have put words where none exist, there is no historical record of such a union. Even that doesn't say they were married. It merely calls Mary Magdalene a "companion" of Jesus, along with his mother and Mary the sister of Lazarus. If there were anything of real substance we can be sure Brown would have cited it. But he didn't. We're just supposed to take his word for it.

Although lacking in the novel, the movie version had Langdon playing "devil's advocate" to Teabing's outlandish statements. But his efforts were half-hearted at best, and only result in Teabing's position being solidified. Langdon's summation of everything in the film is in perfect harmony with gnosticism and most anti-Christ philosophy:

Why does it have to be human or divine? Maybe human is divine.

And maybe it isn't. But that is not an option for *The Da Vinci Code*. It is so intent on proving an unprovable point that it gets tiresomely repetitive.

But that doesn't stop people from scratching their empty heads and wondering if, "Duh, maybe this is really the trout."

The incredible thing is that people who believe these lies consider themselves "enlightened." Scripture speaks to them:

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made

²⁷ Community & the Humanities Dept., University of Pennsylvania, *Op. Cit.*

²⁸ *The Da Vinci Code*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 262.

like corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves, who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (Romans 1:22-32)

Those who take pleasure in novels and movies like *The Da Vinci Code* place themselves under the same judgment as those who produce them. Beware lest you find yourself in that company.

CONCLUSION

There are several books that have been written to counter the claims of *The Da Vinci Code*. Some are Roman Catholic products written in defense of that church's integrity. Ironically, were it not for the Catholic Church's history of bloodshed and repression of the true faith, which continues even today in some "Catholic countries" to some degree, the enemies of God would not have such a strong position. Nor would there be so many eager to hear their position.

Yet those who know the truth understand that these things must come to pass. Jesus said:

Woe to the world because of offenses! For it is necessary that offenses come. But woe to that man by whom the offense comes! (Matthew 18:7)

This is a sobering statement. Men such as Dan Brown, Ron Howard, Tom Hanks, and others involved in denigrating Jesus Christ do not realize the horror that awaits them. They cannot enter into the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns.

It is not our place to call down fire from heaven to destroy our enemies. We are to love them and to pray for them.

Let us pray that they will see the truth and heed the warning of Scripture:

Repent therefore, and be converted, so that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and He shall send Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed to you before, whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:19-21)

As we encounter those who have bought into these lies, let us not lose patience with them, but demonstrate to them the love of Jesus Christ.

The day is coming when He will be vindicated, and we along with Him. In the meantime, let's not forget our position as pilgrims on this earth during this present age.

We may take heart in His promise that, when He returns, we will rule and reign with Him over the nations. Our eternal destiny is not heaven; it is the New Earth wherein righteousness will dwell. With whom will you be numbered in that day? Those who love Him, or those who blaspheme Him?❖

Gnosticism Explained

By Albert James Dager

Gnosis is said to be an experience based upon realization of one's higher Self not through concepts and beliefs, but through reflection upon the "truths" impressed upon one's heart. This is to be accomplished by earnest investigation into the mysteries of Reality aided by higher beings—Messengers of Light—who emanated from the True God.

Gnosticism is the world-view based upon the experience of Gnosis.

In a sense, there is no Gnosis without Gnosticism, for the experience of Gnosis inevitably calls forth a world view wherein it finds its place. The Gnostic world view is experiential, it is based on a certain kind of spiritual experience of Gnosis. Therefore, it will not do to omit, or to dilute, various parts of the Gnostic world view, for were one to do this, the world view would no longer conform to experience.²⁹

Gnosticism is seeing a resurgence these days, largely as a result of the New

Age Movement. It's concept of man is one of divinity, and it's concept of God is that He is flawed. We will look at the various aspects of Gnostic philosophy as conveyed by Stephan A. Hoeller, a "Gnostic Bishop."

The Cosmos

The world (all of nature—the universe) is flawed not because of the fall of man (Adam), but because it was created flawed by a flawed creator. Therefore, the blame for the world's failings, including man's, does not lie with humans, but with the creator.

Deity

The True, transcendent God exists beyond all universes and never created anything. He (or It) "emanated" or brought forth from within Himself the substance of all that exists in all the worlds—visible and invisible. Thus, Gnostics believe that all is God because everything consists of the substance of God.

However, it is believed that many portions of the creation have been projected

29 *The Gnostic World View: A Brief Summary of Gnosticism*, <http://www.gnosis.org/gnintro.htm>

so far from their source (God) that they have become alienated and corrupt portions of the divine essence.

Intermediate deities called Aeons exist between the ultimate True God and the lower emanations, including mankind. They, together with the True God, comprise the realm of Fullness (Pleroma) wherein the potency of divinity operates fully.

One of the Aeons, Sophia ("Wisdom"), is a female deity. From her emanated a flawed being who became the creator of the physical and psychic cosmos, all of which he created in the image of his own flaw. This flawed being was unaware of his origins and thought himself to be the ultimate and absolute God. He did not actually create anything, but took the already existing divine essence and fashioned it into various forms. He is called the "Demiurgos" or "half-maker" who rules over cosmic minions, the Archons or "rulers."

Mankind

Mankind contains a perishable physical and psychic component, as well as a spiritual component which is a fragment of the divine essence, often symbolically referred to as the "divine spark." Humans are generally ignorant of the divine spark within them. This ignorance is fostered by the influence of the false creator.

Over the centuries humans undergo an evolution of consciousness to spiritual freedom and Gnosis via ethical living.

Salvation

Gnostics teach that humans are ignorant of their true origins, their essential divine nature, and their ultimate destiny, and are therefore incapable of evolving into full spiritual awareness. They are caught within their physical existence, hampered by the flawed physical universe from realizing their divine potential.

Help for humans to attain Gnosis has come from the earliest of times by way of

the Aeons, Messengers of Light, which came forth from the True God.

Within Gnostic "scripture" only a few of these "salvific figures" are mentioned. Some of the most important are Seth (the third son of Adam), Jesus, and the Prophet Mani. The majority of Gnostics always looked to Jesus as the principle savior figure (the Soter). Salvation was not accomplished by His suffering and death, but by His life of teaching and His establishing of mysteries.

Gnostics do not look for salvation from sin, but rather from the ignorance of which sin is a consequence.

Destiny

Gnosticism does not emphasize the doctrine of reincarnation, but it is implicit within most Gnostic teachings that those who have not attained a liberating Gnosis will have to be reincarnated.

Christ and Sophia are said to await the spiritual man—the pneumatic Gnostic—at the entrance of Pleroma and help him to enter the "bridechamber" of final reunion with the True God. Psychics may be redeemed and live in a "heavenworld" at the entrance of the Pleroma, but ultimately, every spiritual being will attain Gnosis and will be united with its higher Self—"the angelic Twin." Thus they will be qualified to enter the Pleroma.

Works

Gnostics do not believe in a system of rules. They believe that these originate within the Demiurge and are designed to serve his purposes.

True morality consists of an inner integrity arising from the illumination of the indwelling divine spark.

Morality must be viewed primarily in temporal and secular terms, always subject to changes and modifications in accordance with the spiritual development of the individual. This is situation ethics.

Gnosticism encourages non-attachment and non-conformity to the world

(being in the world, but not of the world). It encourages also a lack of egotism and a respect for the freedom and dignity of others. But it is up to every individual Gnostic to "distill" from these principles their own personal applications.

DEPARTURES FROM TRUE FAITH

Arthur Edward Waite, a Freemason who designed the best-known Tarot deck says this:

The Gnostic sects, the Arabs, Alchemists, Templars, Rosicrucians, and lastly the Freemasons, form the Western chain in the transmission of occult science.³⁰

The Gnostics were the first to divide the nature of the Jesus into two parts—"the one Jesus, a mortal man; the other, Christos, a personification of Nous, the principle of Cosmic Mind. Nous, the greater, was for the period of three years (from baptism to crucifixion) using the fleshly garment of the mortal man (Jesus)."³¹

Gnosticism is incompatible with biblical truth. There is little doubt that some first-century Gnostics called themselves "Christians," much as members of Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormons consider themselves Christians. The issue boils down to this: did the first-century Christian leaders who separated the biblical texts from others which claimed to be gospels do an injustice to truth? Did they pick and choose based upon their personal convictions devoid of honesty and integrity, leaving out certain truths that have been lost to mankind for almost 2,000 years? Or did they base their judgments upon objective, empirical evidence that necessitated that separation?

Careful reading through all of Scripture reveals a cohesiveness with which gnosticism is out of sync. If one rejects the Bible, one rejects Jesus and, therefore, he rejects God. ❖

30 A.E. Waite's translation from *The Tarot of the Bohemians*, quoted by Manly Palmer Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* (Los Angeles: The Philosophical Research Society, 1962), p. CXL.

31 Manly Palmer Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*, *Ibid.*, p. LXXXVI.

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